



## Association of Open University Graduates Region 09 - North

EDITION 7

SPRING 2015

### Local News

Welcome to all AOUG members. The poetic words of Kenneth Moyer clearly sum-up all the thoughts and feelings that abound “When Spring Comes to England”. He writes about the time of year when English exiles all over the world yearn to be back home again.

“Spring has come to England now, and I am over here,  
And yet I know a chance for me will come another year.

To be in England in the Spring, and see the leafing trees,

To catch the fragrance of flowers being wafted on the breeze- - -

Hopefully, there will be many opportunities to enjoy the fine weather and absorb the delights of the changing seasons and also, to participate in planned events. Some members may be interested in visiting Raby Castle which is set in the heart of the Durham Dales a most picturesque location in County Durham. It will be a unique opportunity to delve into the history of the Castle built by the mighty dynasty of the Nevills in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. King Cnut (also known as Canute II the Great) owned the Estate, then known as “Rabi” (derived from “Ra”, which is Danish for boundary, and “Bi”, a settlement or dwelling) in the early 11<sup>th</sup> Century.

Also, members may enjoy exploring the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Walled Gardens, established and designed by Thomas Wright. There are special features in the walls of the garden which are constructed of hand-made bricks with flues that when heated, enabled sub-tropical plants such as, apricots to be grown on the South Terrace. Of these only, the White Ischia Fig survives which was brought to Raby in 1786 by William Henry, Lord Barnard later the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Darlington.

Additionally, for AOUG members who wish to explore aspects of learning the Open University has widened access to free educational materials by partnering with OER Universitas. The news of this partnership coincides with the launch of the University’s innovative new free Badged Open Courses (BOCs) scheme available via both OERu and the OU’s platform for free learning OpenLearn, enabling informal learners to gain recognition for completing online courses. Further information can be found on [www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk) Also, just to remind members to access the AOUG Website [www.aoug.ac.uk](http://www.aoug.ac.uk) in order to get more involved and express and debate their views on our Forum.

**Jean McKenna** – Executive Representative

## **Association News**

### **AGM and Social weekend in Caernarfon, North Wales.**

There is still time to book for the Association's annual get together which this year will be held at the Celtic Royal Hotel, right in the heart of Caernarfon, just five minutes' walk from the famous castle. Full board package from after Friday lunch until after Sunday lunch is £270 and this includes all the evening entertainment on both Friday and Saturday evening. The Gala Dinner on Saturday is a real chance to dust off your finery and enjoy a relaxing evening with a pre-dinner drink, a three course dinner, an after dinner speaker and then musical entertainment. This year we have a 'twmpath' – the Welsh equivalent of a Scottish Ceilidh.

In addition there are the optional excursions starting on Friday afternoon with a train ride up Snowdon and weather permitting, a chance to take in the views from the top. Then on Saturday afternoon, there is the chance to visit the National Slate Museum, based on the site of the Dinorwic Quarry, and on Sunday morning, a unique opportunity to take a bus ride deep inside the mountains to experience the Electric Mountain Power Station. All the excursions and other activities are open to all OU graduates, friends and family whether they are AOUG members or not. Everyone is very welcome. So come on your own or bring a group, the choice is yours but do come!

### **Voting**

If you are not able to attend this year's AGM, under Company Law, you are entitled to a proxy vote, the appropriate insert being in the forthcoming issue of OMEGA. Do please cast your vote both for the Executive Committee elections and for any Resolution or Motion to be considered at the AGM.

### **Summary of Executive Committee Meeting at Milton Keynes**

At the meeting on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February the Executive Committee re-appointed Trevor Taylor as our OMEGA Editor for the next twelve months and it was also noted that the Spring edition of OMEGA would be produced in full colour. Lesley Sleigh was also re-appointed for the coming year as Company Secretary. Unfortunately due to family commitments, Violet Rook has had to resign as Development Officer and so all her areas of responsibility are now being shared out amongst the remaining four Officers.

Cheryl Cowley our Clerical Officer has had a request for a reduction in her hours approved and so from the start of February, Office hours will be 10am until 4pm Monday to Friday. You are still able to leave messages on the answer phone when Cheryl is not available, and she will respond to you as soon as is possible on her next working day. It has been approved that AOUG advertise through Reeds Employment Agency for a Clerical Assistant to work just one day a week alongside Cheryl to learn the Office procedures.

The AOUG Foundation for Education Awards for the Regions and Nations are once again to be widely advertised. Nominations for any new graduate who has gained their OU degree within the last twelve months despite overcoming adversity over and above that of the average student need to be received at the AOUG Office by 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2015.

Information will also go out in March to all OU research departments to encourage nominations for our AOUG Foundation for Education Research Awards. The presentations for these will take place as usual on the first Friday in October on the OU campus and will be followed by our Annual Foundation Lecture which this year is going to be by Paul Catley, the Head of the Law School. Tickets, for any or all of the day, including a buffet lunch, are priced at £10 each and can be obtained from the AOUG Office (01908 653316). If you have never been to the OU campus before, then this is your perfect opportunity to explore the beautiful grounds.

The Officers have had several meetings with the OU over the Winter months and further meetings are in the process of being arranged. All of these seem to present positive support. The new OUSA President, Ruth Tudor, has also met the Officers and it has been agreed that links with AOUG will be included on the OUSA Website.

Research is in progress as to AOUG making more use of various electronic communications in order to promote our Association and to provide more fluid communications between members.

The most important function of the Spring EC Meeting is to set the budget for the ensuing year. Money is always extremely tight and priorities for the year have to be agreed. Executive Representatives' budgets increased over the last two years to enable the production of the Local Newsletters but this has now been reduced back down to just £100 for most areas for the year. You may recall that in the Winter 2014 OMEGA members' attention was drawn to the ever spiralling cost of sending three Newsletters annually by post. Please do check that AOUG Office has your current e-mail address so that you do not miss out.

### **Members' Feedback**

If you would like any questions or opinions raised at the Executive Committee on your behalf please let me know. I am here to represent you.

**Executive Representative** - Jean McKenna 07984 969359

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### **Local Contact**

**Newcastle** - Violet Rook 07962 276091 [viola.rook@btinternet.com](mailto:viola.rook@btinternet.com)

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Name : ..... PI number .....

Tel: .....E-mail address: .....

I enclose a donation of stamps to receive my Newsletter by post .....

I enclose an article on a local issue for the next Newsletter .....

# Diary Dates

## **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April. 2pm**

Meet at the main entrance of the Great North Museum formerly known as the Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle -upon-Tyne, NE2 4PT. Visit the Roman exhibitions where one can see items from the Roman Wall and the Camps at Vindolanda, Chesters and Corbridge. Newcastle was a Roman City and photographs that were taken near the city walls are available to view from a recent archaeological dig. The museum is not far from the Haymarket Metro Station where one can travel to Newcastle Central Railway Station.

## **Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May. 1pm**

Meet at the main entrance to Raby Castle, Staindrop, Darlington, County Durham, DL2 3AH. It is one of the best preserved castles in North East England set in the heart of the Durham Dales and is the home of Lord Barnard. Uncover the 600 years of history of Raby Castle and a glimpse of life throughout the ages with examples of fine interiors and architecture spanning the Medieval, Victorian, Georgian and Regency periods creating a magnificent backdrop for the stunning art collection. Enjoy a guided tour followed by tea and freshly made scones.

*Please note that your current Executive Representative is standing for re-election from the 9<sup>th</sup> May AGM.*

## **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June. 1pm**

Meet at the main entrance to Beamish Museum the world famous open air museum situated in County Durham, DH9 0RG. Enjoy a wonderful day out with so many things to see, the town represents a typical North Eastern market town in the years leading up to the First World War and the Railway Station, adjacent to it is a typical country station of the Edwardian era. There is much more to enjoy encompassing the story of life in North East England during the 1820s, 1900s and 1940s.

## **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July. 11 am**

Meet at the entrance of the Bowes Railway at Springwell Village, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE9 7QJ. The railway dates from 1826 and is the only preserved rope-hauled railway in the world which was designed by George Stephenson and passed into the Bowes family in 1850. It was operated by them until nationalisation in 1947 and visitors can enjoy a unique insight into how coal was moved from local collieries to the Tyne at Jarrow for shipment. There are two steam engines, diesel locomotives, old colliery wagons, historic workshops and an historical exhibition.

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I /we will be attending the visit to the Great North Museum .....

I /we will be attending the visit to Raby Castle .....

I /we will be attending the visit to Beamish Museum .....

I/we will be attending the visit to Bowes Railway .....

I should like to know more about being a Local Contact .....